

NEW ENGLAND ASTER

Symphyotrichum novae-angliae (L.) Nesom

Plant Symbol = SYNO2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Elsberry Plant Materials Center



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Alternate Names

Aster, starwort, first flower

Uses

New England aster can be used for roadside plantings, prairie restoration, wildlife cover, prairie landscaping and wetland situations.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

New England aster is a native perennial forb which grows from 2 ½ to 6.0 feet tall with hairy stems and leaves. The alternate leaves are up to 4 inches long and 1 inch wide, with broad, clasping bases and pointed tips. The individually stalked flower heads are in an open, rounded cluster at the tops of the main stem branches. The flower stalks and bracts at the base of each flower head are covered with gland-tipped hairs. Each head is about 1 ½ inches wide, with 40 or more bright purple, petal-like ray flowers surrounding a central yellow disk. The ray flowers are sometimes pinkish purple or pale lavender in color. New England aster is the showiest of the genus, and stand out on roadside shoulders and ditches from August through late October

Adaptation and Distribution

New England aster grows in prairie swales, wet meadows, alluvial soils and thickets, low fields in valleys, and moist ground along streams. It ranges from Quebec to Alberta, south to North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

Prepare a clean weed free seedbed by disking and harrowing or using chemical weed control. Firm the seedbed by cultipacking. Seedbed should be firm enough to allow seed to be planted 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep. The seed of New England aster needs cold stratification for maximum germination if seeded in spring or summer (34-40 degrees Fahrenheit for 30-40 days). Use a planter that insures proper seeding depth and good seed and soil contact like a brillion roller that is capable of handling and placing seed in a uniform manner. There are approximately 1,100,000 seeds in a pound of New England aster.

Seeding rates for New England aster:

For seed production:

Solid stand – 40 pure live seed (PLS) in a 36-inch row; - .53 pounds PLS/acre.

Prairie planting: mixture – 1 – 5 PLS per square foot (0.04 to 0.20) pound PLS per acre.

Use no fertilizer the establishment year unless soil test indicates a low deficiency of less than 15 PPM of phosphorus and or less than 90 PPM of potassium. Use no nitrogen during the establishment year as this can encourage weed competition.

Management

Reduce weed competition by mowing over the height of the New England aster plants or cultivating between the rows. Use a non-selective contact herbicide while dormant or a pre emergent herbicide to control annuals after the New England aster is established. Remove dead plant material in the spring for faster green-up by shredding. Burning of dead plant refuse can weaken the plants unless done before it has broken dormancy.

Pests and Potential Problems

The most destructive diseases in the cultivation of asters are various forms of stem-rot. They are of fungus origin and are induced by allowing the plants to remain moist too long at a time.

The infection usually takes place in the seed-row, but often no effect is noticed until the plants are nearly full-grown, when they suddenly wilt and die. The "yellow disease" causes the plants to have a bleached appearance and to make a spindling growth. Thorough cultivation of the soil is the best preventive.

Environmental Concerns

New England aster is not known to invade in areas where this species does not naturally occur.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

According to the publication entitled 'Improved Conservation Plants Materials Released by NRCS and Cooperators through September 2001', there are no cultivars, source identified, selected or tested class releases of New England aster from the Plant Materials Program.

Prepared By & Species Coordinators:

Steven Bruckerhoff, Jerry Kaiser, Jimmy Henry,
Elsberry Plant Materials Center, Elsberry, Missouri

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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